

ZONDERVAN  
LANGUAGE  
BASICS

Building Competency  
with Words Occurring  
50 Times or More

# BIBLICAL HEBREW VOCABULARY *in* CONTEXT

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# Introduction

## What is a Contextual Vocabulary List?

A contextual vocabulary list is comprised of texts with vocabulary words already memorized by a student. The selected texts are designed to reinforce basic vocabulary by studying those words “in context.” In this resource, we have identified and selected 195 verses or verse fragments from the Hebrew Bible that contain all 642 Hebrew words (excluding proper names) that appear 50 times or more in the Hebrew Bible. We have glossed those few words (only 56!) that appear less than 50 times. Proper names appear in gray text for ease of identification. If a student has successfully memorized all Hebrew words that appear 50 times or more in the Hebrew Bible, he or she should be able to work through each of the texts that appear in this list without the use of a lexicon.

## Why Study Vocabulary in Context?

It’s one thing to memorize a vocabulary word on a vocabulary card without any other context, something like נָתַן (to give) or נָכַח (to strike). It’s another thing entirely to see that same word “in context” and make the connection between the inflected form and its lexical form, as in לְנָתָה (in order to give) or נָכַח (and he struck). Unless a student can identify inflected forms in context and connect them with their vocabulary memorization, they will struggle to read and enjoy Hebrew. Additionally, seeing words in context helps the student to understand the range of meaning Hebrew words can have.

By encountering Hebrew vocabulary in context, students will strengthen their memorization of a word’s meaning and improve the time it takes to recall that meaning. Additionally, studying Hebrew vocabulary in context allows for students to make connections between words that will facilitate memorization. For example, in Gen 12:6 there is a list of animals (sheep, cattle, male and female donkeys, and camels). By studying the names of these animals together in context, students are better able to store and recall this information.

To read Hebrew well takes practice, lots and lots of practice. Each year, students ask what they should do to improve their Hebrew skills. The answer is always the same. Read more Hebrew! Reading Hebrew is what makes you better at reading Hebrew. We recognize, however, that unguided immersion into the Hebrew Bible is a daunting task, especially for the beginner. This is why we have created a contextual vocabulary list. Students will be encouraged by working with a list that has been designed to improve their skill in reading, one of the great joys of studying a classical language like Hebrew.

## How Do You Use a Contextual Vocabulary List?

You read it! A contextual vocabulary list is designed for intermediate Hebrew studies, after a student has mastered the basics of Hebrew grammar and memorized all Hebrew words that appear 50 times or more in the Hebrew Bible. The contextual vocabulary list that we have created appears two times in this resource. Each list is identically numbered (1–195) in order to facilitate study.

In the first list, each text appears with a wooden English translation and space to take notes on the Hebrew text. This first list can be used like a workbook. Students can gloss words, comment on difficult morphology, or identify important syntactical constructions by using *Biblical Hebrew: A Compact Guide*, 2nd edition (Zondervan, 2019).

The second list appears without English translations and less space for note-taking. This second list is designed to test a student's ability to sight-read the Hebrew text without recourse to a grammar, lexicon, or English translation. The ultimate purpose and design of this resource is to facilitate a student's ability to sight-read all 195 texts that appear in the contextual vocabulary list.

In a classroom context, this list can be used to create vocabulary quizzes that depart from the traditional presentation of a simple lexical form requiring a generic translation from the student. Because the lists are numbered, instructors can assign texts and quiz from appropriate blocks of material that suit the particular needs of various classroom contexts and environments.

This resource is also well-suited for self study. Students studying on their own should select small blocks of texts from List 1, perhaps ten or fifteen texts at a time. After having studied those texts in the first list, students can check their ability to sight-read by using the second list that appears without translations. Once a group of texts has been mastered, students can progress through the remaining texts in the same manner, always keeping in mind the vital importance of reviewing previous material.

By way of encouragement, it is motivating to understand that once a student can identify in context all 642 Hebrew words that appear 50 times or more in the Hebrew Bible, he or she will have access to approximately *90 percent* of the Old Testament in the original language.<sup>1</sup> Knowing this modest block of vocabulary well should yield significant returns on a student's investment.

## The Lexicon

The lexicon located in the back of this book contains all 642 Hebrew words (excluding proper names) that occur 50 or more times in the Hebrew Bible. Its contents are derived from *The Vocabulary Guide to Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic*, 2nd edition (Zondervan, 2019). The numbers that appear in the left-hand column of this lexicon correspond to the numbers in the frequency list of the *Vocabulary Guide* and to those numbers that identify each of the vocabulary cards from *Old Testament Hebrew Vocabulary Cards*, 2nd edition (Zondervan, 2019).

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1. According to the Accordance database, there are 384,059 Hebrew words in the Hebrew Bible (excluding proper names, pronominal suffixes, and Aramaic). The 642 Hebrew words studied in this contextual vocabulary list, comprise 348,503 total occurrences, or 89.7% of the Hebrew words in the Hebrew Bible.

List 1

**Hebrew Texts  
with  
Translations**

(1) בְּרִאָשִׁית בָּרָא (created) אֱלֹהִים את הַשְׁמִינִים וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

In a (the) beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

**Genesis 1:1**

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(2) וַיּוֹקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לֹאֹזֶר יוֹם וּלְחַשֵּׁךְ קָרָא לִילָה

וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בָּקָר יוֹם אֶחָד:

And God called (to) the light “day” and (to) the darkness he called  
“night” and it was evening and it was morning,  
day one (the first day).

**Genesis 1:5**

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(3) וַיְבָרֶךְ אֲתֶם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לְהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ (be fruitful)

וְרָבוּ וּמְלָאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ

And God blessed them and God said to them,  
“Be fruitful and increase and fill the earth.”

**Genesis 1:28a**

וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה-טוֹב מְאֹד (4)

And God saw all that he had made and,  
behold, [it was] very good.

**Genesis 1:31a**

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וַיָּכֹל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְׁבִּיעִי מִלְאַכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה (5)

וַיֵּשֶׁבּוּ בַּיּוֹם הַשְׁבִּיעִי

And God finished on the seventh day his work which  
he had done. And he rested on the seventh day.

**Genesis 2:2a**

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וְמֵעַץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע לֹא תִאכְלֶנּוּ מִמֶּנּוּ (6)

כִּי בַּיּוֹם אֲכַלְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת תָּמוֹת:

And from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil  
you shall not eat from it. For on the day that  
you eat from it, you will certainly die.

**Genesis 2:17**

(7) וַיְצַא ר (he formed) יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִן־הָאָדָם בְּלִחְיתָה הַשְׁדָה וְאֵת  
**כָּל־עֹז הַשְׁמִים וַיַּבְאֶא אֶל־הָאָדָם לְרֹאֹת מִה־יָּקַרְא־לּוּ וּכְלֹא אָשָׁר  
 יָקַרְא־לּוּ הָאָדָם נַפְשׁ חַיָּה הוּא שְׁמוֹ:**

And Yahweh God formed from the ground every living creature of the field and every bird of heaven. And he brought [them] to the man to see what he would call it [them]. And whatever the man called [each] living creature, that was its name.

**Genesis 2:19**

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(8) וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֹאת הַפָּעָם עַצְם מֵעַצְמִי וּבָשָׂר מִבָּשָׂרִי  
**לֹאֵת יָקַר אֲשָׁה כִּי מְאִישׁ לְקַח־זֹאת:**

And the man said, "This is now, bone from (of) my bones and flesh from my flesh. She (this one) will be called 'woman' because she (this one) was taken from man."

**Genesis 2:23**

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(9) עַל־כֵּן יַעֲזֹב־אִישׁ אֶת־אָבִיו וְאֶת־אָמֹנוֹ וַיַּדַּבֵּק בְּאִשָּׁתוֹ  
**וְהִי לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד:**

Therefore, a man will leave his father and his mother and he will cleave to (be united with) his wife and they will become one flesh.

**Genesis 2:24**

(10) וַיֹּאמֶר מָה עָשִׂתْ קֹול דְּמִי אֲחִיךְ צַעֲקִים אֱלֵי מִן־הָאָדָם:

And he (Yahweh) said, "What have you done? The voice of the blood of your brother is crying out to me from the ground."

**Genesis 4:10**

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(11) וְנַחַת מֵצָא חַן בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה:

And Noah found favor in the eyes of Yahweh.

**Genesis 6:8**

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(12) וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לְפָנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וַתִּמְלָא הָאָרֶץ חַמֵּס:

And the earth was ruined (had become corrupt) before God.

And the earth was filled with violence.

**Genesis 6:11**

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(13) וּבְחַדְשׁ הַשְׁנִי בְּשֶׁבַע וּשְׁנָהִים יוֹם לְחַדְשׁ יְבָשָׂה הָאָרֶץ:

And in the second month, on the twenty seventh day of the month, the earth had dried up.

**Genesis 8:14**

## List 2

# **Hebrew Texts without Translations**

(1) בְּרָאשִׁית בָּרָא (created) אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמִים וְאֶת הָאָرֶץ:

Genesis 1:1

(2) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לְאֹור יוֹם וְלֵחֶשֶׁךְ קְרָא לַיְלָה

וַיֹּהַי־עָרָב וַיֹּהַי־בְּקָר יוֹם אֶחָד:

Genesis 1:5

(3) וַיְבָרֶךְ אֶתְכֶם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לְהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ (be fruitful)

וְרָבוּ וְמָלָאו אֶת־הָאָרֶץ

Genesis 1:28a

(4) וַיֹּרֶא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־כָּל־אָשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהַנֶּה־טוֹב מְאֹד

Genesis 1:31a

(5) וַיְבָل אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְׁבִיעִי מְלָאכֹת֜וֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה

וַיִּשְׁבַּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְׁבִיעִי

Genesis 2:2a

(6) וּמַעַז הַדַּעַת טֹב וְרֵעׁ לֹא תָכַל מִמְנָנוּ

כִּי בַיּוֹם אֲכַלְךָ מִמְנָנוּ מוֹת חִמּוֹת:

Genesis 2:17

(7) וַיַּצְאֵר (he formed) יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִזֶּה אָדָם בְּלִحְיַת הַשְׁדָה וְאַתָּ  
בְּלִעְזָר הַשְׁמִים וַיָּבֹא אֶל־הָאָדָם לְרֹאשׁוֹ מִה־יָּקְרָא־לּוֹ וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר  
יָקְרָא־לּוֹ הָאָדָם נִפְשַׁח חַיָּה הוּא שְׁמוֹ:

Genesis 2:19

(8) וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֹאת הַפִּעָם עָצָם מֵעַצְמִי וְבָשָׂר מִבָּשָׂרִי  
לֹזֶאת יָקְרָא אָשָׁה כִּי מַאֲיִשׁ לְקַח־הַזֹּאת:

Genesis 2:23

(9) עַל־כֵן יַעֲזֹב־אִישׁ אֶת־אָבִיו וְאֶת־אָמוֹ וַדְבַּקְ בְּאָשָׁתוֹ  
וְהִי לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד:

Genesis 2:24

(10) וַיֹּאמֶר מָה עָשִׂית קֹל דָּמִי אֲחִיךְ צָעֲקִים אֶלְי מִזֶּה אָדָם:

Genesis 4:10

(11) וְנִמְצָא חַן בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה:

Genesis 6:8

(12) וַתִּשְׁחַת הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וַתִּמְלָא הָאָרֶץ חַמֵּס:

Genesis 6:11

# Hebrew-English Lexicon

This lexicon contains all 642 Hebrew words (excluding proper names) that occur 50 or more times in the Hebrew Bible. Its contents are derived from *The Vocabulary Guide to Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic*, 2nd edition (Zondervan, 2019). The numbers that appear in the left-hand column of this lexicon correspond to the numbers in the frequency list of the *Vocabulary Guide* and to those numbers that identify each of the vocabulary cards from *Old Testament Hebrew Vocabulary Cards*, 2nd edition (Zondervan, 2019).

- 34      אָבִי father, ancestor; (ms cstr) אָבֹת (1,210)
- 237     אָבֶד (Q) to perish, vanish, be(come) lost, go astray; (Pi) cause to perish, destroy; (Hi) exterminate (185)
- 606     אָבָה (Q) to be willing, consent, yield to, want something (54)
- 549     אָבֵין (adj) poor, needy (61)
- 171     אָבָן (fs) stone; (fp) אָבָנִים (276)
- 62      אָדוֹן lord, master; (of God 439x) אָדוֹן Lord (774)
- 91      אָדָם man, mankind, humankind (546)
- 202     אָדָמָה ground, land, earth (222)
- 582     אָדָן base, pedestal (57)
- 206     אָהָב (Q) to love (of human and divine love);  
(Pi ptc) lover (217)
- 139     אָהָל tent (348)
- 147     אָוֶן (conj) or (321)
- 552     אָוָלָם porch; also spelled אַיְלָם (61)
- 436     אָוּזִין iniquity, wickedness, evildoer (81)
- 447     אָזֶר treasure, treasury, storehouse (79)
- 332     אָזֶר (cs) light, daylight, sunshine (120)
- 448     אָזֶת (cs) sign, mark, pledge; (cp) אֲזֶת (79)
- 288     אָזֶן then, since, before (141)
- 233     אָזֶן (fs) ear; (fd cstr) אַזְנִי (188)
- 76      אָחִי brother; (ms cstr) אָחִים; (mp) אָחִים (629)
- 45      אָחָד one; (fs) אָחָד (976)
- 335     אָחָזָה sister, relative, loved one (119)
- 534     אָחַזְךָ (Q) to seize, grasp, take hold (of), hold fast (63)
- 518     אָחַזְתָּה property, possession (66)
- 256     אָחָר (adj) other, another; (fs) אָחָרָת (166)

## ZONDERVAN ACADEMIC

*Biblical Hebrew Vocabulary in Context*

Copyright © 2019 by Miles V. Van Pelt and Gary D. Pratico

ISBN 978-0-310-09847-8 (softcover)

ISBN 978-0-310-11126-9 (ebook)

Requests for information should be addressed to:

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*Cover design: Holli Leegwater*

*Cover photo: Sandipkumar Patel/iStock*

*Typesetting: Miles V. Van Pelt*

*Printed in the United States of America*

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*Basics of Biblical Hebrew Workbook*

*Charts of Biblical Hebrew*

*Graded Reader of Biblical Hebrew*

*Old Testament Hebrew Vocabulary Cards*

*The Vocabulary Guide to Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic*

*Biblical Hebrew Laminated Sheet*

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*Biblical Hebrew: A Compact Guide*

*Basics of Biblical Hebrew Video Lectures*

*Basics of Biblical Hebrew Vocabulary Audio*

*Basics of Biblical Aramaic: Complete Grammar, Lexicon,  
and Annotated Text*

*Basics of Biblical Aramaic Video Lectures*